

The Prediction of Marital Burnout Based on Personality Traits

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Abstract

Family consistency is affected by the quality of spouses' relationships. Therefore, identifying the effective factors on the interpersonal affective relationships of couples is of particular importance. The present study was conducted to determine the relationship between personality traits and marital burnout in nurses. The research design was descriptive-correlational. Among married nurses in Kashan hospitals, 210 were studied by convenience sampling method. Couple burnout measure (CBM) and Neo personality traits inventory (NEO-FFI) were used to collect information. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (correlation and regression analysis). Findings showed that between neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, agreement and marital burnout are correlated as 0.11, 0.24, -0.25, -0.25 and -0.07, respectively. In addition, the results of regression analysis indicated that the three traits of neuroticism, agreement and openness to experience predicted 14.6% of the variance of marital burnout. The results indicated that personality traits are related to marital burnout and the role of the three traits of neuroticism, agreement and openness to experience in marital burnout is higher, and accordingly, it can be said that educational and counseling interventions related to marriage and couple therapy focused on personality traits can play a role in preventing and treating marital burnout.

Key words: Marital burnout, Personality traits, Nurses

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important factors affecting family functioning is the satisfaction and agreement of family members, especially couples (Sinha & Mukerjee, 1991). Dissatisfaction with couples' relationships reduces mental health and life satisfaction (Knock, 1995) and difficulty in their social relationships (Niolon, 2000). Marital satisfaction is a condition in which couples are happy and satisfied with their marriage (Mirhahmadzadeh et al, 2003). Terman et al. (1938) pointed out for the first time that sustainable agreements have an impact on marital life (quoted by Claxton et al., 2011). As Karney and Bradbury (1995) have pointed out, it is difficult to imagine a model of marriage that nothing has to do with it. According to the

vulnerability-stress-adaptation model proposed by Karney and Bradbury (1995), individuals with stable characteristics (such as personality traits, attachment styles, level of education) enter into marital life. The model states that couples use adaptive processes to understand and negotiate on stressful events (such as overtime, financial issues, etc.). They affect marital satisfaction on the whole.

Sustained romantic relationships require individuals to look beyond the physical appearance of their partner's personality traits. Accordingly, previous research has focused on the relationship between personality traits by choosing a spouse, satisfaction with relationship and marital satisfaction (Donnellan, Conger, and Bryant, 2004).

The Huston's social ecology model (2000) to analyze marriage refers to three levels: society; individual characteristics of couples (for example, physical and psychological and social characteristics, and personality traits); and interpersonal behavior in marriage. This model emphasizes the full-fledged role of personality in marital satisfaction and lasting relationships.

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Various studies have shown that multiple variables predict marital satisfaction, and researchers are more concerned with the role of personal characteristics in marital relationships (Zoby, 2005).

Costa and McCrae (1992) argue that marital satisfaction can be affected by multiple factors such as personality traits, emotional styles, communication and motivational styles and personal patterns of response. These factors are thought to be stable throughout the life span. The personality refers to the sustainable traits that appear in different situations (De Fruyt, Bolle & Decuyper, 2012).

Costa and McCrae (1989) refer to five big personality traits: neuroticism, extroversion, agreement, openness to experiences and conscientiousness. Neuroticism is characterized by features such as anxiety, tension, impulsivity, depression, weak self-esteem, regret and hostility; extroversion is characterized by a tendency toward being positive, having energy, intimacy, and assertiveness; the openness to experience refers to tendency to curiosity, art of friendship, altruistic activities, flexibility and rationality; agreement is characterized with features such as desire for forgiveness, kindness, benevolence, empathy, counseling, humanity and trust; conscientiousness is characterized with a tendency to being regular, rationality, calmness, efficiency, self-regulation and progress.

Several cross-sectional and longitudinal studies have reported that there is a relationship between personality traits and marital satisfaction (Read et al., 1990; Karney and Bradbury, 1997; Caughlin et al. 2000; Olson and Nemchek, 1999; Gattis and colleagues, 2004; Rogge et al., 2006).

Both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies indicate a negative relationship between the neuroticism traits and marital satisfaction (Claxton et al., 2011). This trait is related with negative affect (Ormel&Wohlfarth, 1991), preparedness for negative mood (Gross, Sutton & Ketelaar 1998), the passive coping (Watson and Hubbard, 1996) and the preference of negative stimuli (Rusting & Larsen, 1995). The findings of Heller's meta-analysis, Watson & Ellis (2004) show a strong relationship between neuroticism and marital satisfaction.

While many studies report a strong correlation between neuroticism and marital satisfaction, there are few research findings that consistently and persistently show that other traits of five major factors play a role in marital satisfaction. Some studies have shown that husband's extroversion is related to poor marital satisfaction (Claxton et al., 2011). Other researches show a positive relationship between extroversion and marital satisfaction (Barelds,

2005; Belsky& Hsieh, 1998) and extroversion has special importance for women in marriage (Chen et al., 2007). Accordingly, couples who have less social interactions and interpersonal relationships facing with crisis in marital relationship are vulnerable and subsequently experience couple burnout (Koochi et al., 2014). The subject becomes more complicated when some studies have reported a lack of relation between extroversion and marital satisfaction (Bouchard et al., 1999; Donnellan et al., 2004; Gattis et al., 2004).

The studies have shown that openness to experience, agreement and conscientiousness are generally, but not permanently, linked to marital satisfaction. Each of these traits, as opposed to neuroticism, has been considered as a positive trait (Watson & Humrichouse, 2006; Botwin, Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Buchar et al., 1997). Watson and Humrichouse (2006) found that reduced openness to experience, agreement and conscientiousness were associated with reduced marital satisfaction during the first two years of marriage. Donnellan et al. (2006) showed that the agreement and conscientiousness of the spouses are related to their marital satisfaction in general and the openness to experience is associated with the sexual satisfaction of women. Heller et al. (2004) in a meta-analysis study showed that agreement and conscientiousness were related, respectively, to marital satisfaction. However, some studies have reported that there is no relationship between these personality traits and marital satisfaction (Karney & Bradbury, 1995).

A careful examination of the relationship between personality traits and marital satisfaction is important in helping people make reasonable choices in choosing a spouse (Orayzi, Abedi and Amini, 2016). Also, the role of personality traits can be considered in educational and counseling interventions related to marriage and couples therapy. Given the discrepancy between the findings of previous research on the relationship between personality traits and marital satisfaction/dissatisfaction, the present study aimed to investigate the relationship between personality traits and marital burnout and determination of the contribution of each personality traits in predicting marital burnout.

Method

The present research is a correlation study. The statistical population of this study was married nurses of Kashan city hospitals. 210 male and female nurses were studied with convenience sampling. The researcher explaining the purpose of the study asked the nurses to participate in the research if they wish to. The couple burnout measure (CBM) and NEO personality traits inventory (NEO-FFI) was used to collect data.

Couple burnout measure (CBM) is a self-report instrument, which is designed by Pinez (quoted by Basharpour et al., 2015) to measure the degree of marital burnout among couples. This questionnaire has 20 items, of which three main components are: physical exhaustion (feelings of fatigue, weakness and sleep disturbances), emotional exhaustion (depression, disappointment and trapping, etc.), and psychological exhaustion (feelings of worthlessness, frustration, anger toward the husband, etc.). The scoring of this inventory is done using a 7-point Likert scale in the range of between 1 (never) and 7 (always). Four items are scored inversely and a higher score in this scale is a sign of more burnout. The reliability coefficient of this scale using test-retest method was 0.89 for one month, 0.76 for a period of two months and 0.66 for a period of four month. The assessment of the CBM validity coefficient has shown that it has an internal consistency between the variables in the range of 0.84 and 0.90. CBM validity has been confirmed by negative correlations with positive relational characteristics. Pinez has reported the reliability coefficient of this questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha 0.86. In a research by Basharpour et al. (2015), to determine the reliability of the couple burnout measure, used Cronbach's alpha and split-half method that for the whole questionnaire, was 0.94 and 0.92, respectively, which indicates a desirable reliability coefficient. In the research conducted by Navidi (2005) and Davarniya, et al. (2015) Cronbach's alpha was 0.86. In peresent study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.90.

Neo personality traits inventory (NEO-FFI): This tool has 60 items and measures five traits of neuroticism, extroversion, openness to experience, agreement, and conscientiousness. In this questionnaire, the answer to each item is scored on a five-point Likert scale of one to five. Several studies have confirmed the reliability and validity of this scale. Costa and McCrae (1992), in a seven-year longitudinal study, have a coefficient of reliability of 0.51 to 0.82 for the eighteen sub-scales of neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience and reliability coefficient of 0.63 to 0.81 for the five main factors in men and women (Costa and McCrae 1992, quoted in Besharat et al, 2006). In studies on the psychometric properties of this scale in Iranian samples (Garooosi Farshi, 1999) the reliability coefficients of the main dimensions of the sample have been reported from 0.53 to 0.87. In a study conducted by Sami et al. (2014), the reliability of this questionnaire was calculated using the internal consistency method that its total Cronbach's alpha coefficient was equal to 0.83. In the research by Sadati et al. (2015), reliability of this questionnaire was obtained 0.75 by Cronbach's alpha. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for neuroticism, extraversion, and openness to experience, agreement and conscientiousness were obtained 0.79, 0.74, 0.78, 0.73 and

0.76, respectively. Mohammadi (2011) reported Cronbach's alpha for neuroticism, extraversion, and openness to experience, agreement and conscientiousness 0.86, 0.77, 0.73, 0.68 and 0.81 respectively (qouted in Tamannaefifar & Tovliat 2016).

Findings

According to the results of Table 3, in 3 steps, personality traits can predict marital burnout among married nurses in Kashan hospitals. And out of the five personality traits, extraversion and conscientiousness have been eliminated from the model due to the negligible impact of the model.

According to the results of tables 4, in the first step, the agreement with the beta coefficient of -0.251, explained about 6.3% of the variance of marital burnout. In the second step, neuroticism with a beta coefficient of 0.204 was added to the agreement and has increased the

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of couple burnout and personality traits

Variable Indices	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Couple (couple) burnout	28	95	64.92	16.527
Neuroticism	18	47	24.59	4.652
Extraversion	20	50	37.24	4.082
Open to the experience	24	47	36.85	4.121
Agreement	24	45	34.21	4.192
Conscientiousness	23	48	36.12	4.120

Table 2: Correlation coefficients of couple burnout and personality traits

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Neuroticism	1					
Extraversion	**0.22	1				
Openness to the experience	**0.47	**0.42	1			
Agreement	**0.30	**0.58	**0.59	1		
Conscientiousness	**0.58	**0.51	**0.49	**0.49	1	
Couple (marital) burnout	*0.11	**−0.24	**−0.25	**−0.25	−0.07	1

** Significant at 99% confidence level (p<0.01), * Significance at 95% confidence level (p<0.05)

Table 3: Results of stepwise regression analysis to predict marital burnout based on personality traits

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted coefficient of determination	Error standard deviation
Step 1 Agreement	0.251	0.063	0.058	16.037
Step 2 Agreement	0.317	0.101	0.092	15.748
Neuroticism				
Step 3 Agreement	0.382	0.146	0.133	15.386
Neuroticism				
Openness to the experience				

Dependent variable: Marital burnout

Table 4: Regression coefficients to predict marital burnout through personality traits

		B	SE	Beta	t	P value
Step 1	Fixed amount	98.769	9.120		10.830	0.001
	Agreement	-0.989	0.265	-0.0251	-3.379	0.001
Step 2	Fixed amount	82.039	10.604		7.736	0.001
	Agreement	-1.232	0.273	-0.313	-0.420	0.001
	Neuroticism	0.724	0.246	0.204	2.946	0.004
Step 3	Fixed amount	94.068	10.983		8.564	0.001
	Agreement	-0.685	0.314	-0.174	-2.183	0.030
	Neuroticism	1.043	0.259	0.294	4.031	0.001
	Openness to experience	-1.134	0.344	-0.283	-3.298	0.001

B: non-standard regression coefficient, Beta: standard regression coefficient

explanation power of marital burnout to 10.1%. In the third step, the openness to experience with a beta coefficient of -0.283 was added to the two previous personality traits and has increased the power to explain marital burnout to 14.6%.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that there is a relationship between personality dynamics and marital burnout. Based on these results, the personality traits of neuroticism, agreement and openness to the experience, are predictor of marital burnout. The findings of Donnellan et al. (2004), Shiota and Levenson (2007), Najafi (2016), Sadati et al. (2015) and Hosseini et al. (2013) study are consistent with the findings of the present study. Most of previous studies have shown that neuroticism has a relationship with problematic relationships, dissatisfaction and tendency to divorce (Karney and Bradbury, 1995; Belsky and Hsieh, 1998; Schmitt, Kliegel, & Shapiro, 2007).

In explaining the relationship between neuroticism and marital burnout, we can say that people with neuroticism tend to negative emotionality. The agitation, capricious and uncertainty of these individuals in critical situations involve couples in a vicious circle of negative interactions that may lead to contradictions and consequently marital burnout due to people with neuroticism use avoidance strategies and severe emotional reactions (Sadati et al, 2015).

Individuals with agreement trait have features like candor, friendship (altruism), companionship, mercifulness and humility. Such people are compromised and helpful and believe that others are also helpful (Razeghi et al., 2011). These characteristics make it easier for people to love and help their spouse. These conditions increase the quality of marital life and staying away from burnout. The research of Heller et al. (2004) and Donnellan et al. (2006) reported a positive relationship between agreement and marital satisfaction.

About role of openness to experience, individuals with this trait experience negative and positive emotions more intensely. These people have the ability to understand and empathize with their spouses. Accordingly, it can be said that this trait leads to more satisfaction and less burnout of the spouses (Naderi et al., 2014). Research by Donnellan et al. (2006) and Watson and Humrhouse (2006) have shown that there is a positive relationship between openness to experience and marital satisfaction.

The present study showed that the two extraversion and conscientiousness traits did not contribute to the prediction of marital burnout. There is little concurrence that extroversion (as opposed to neuroticism), which is associated with positive emotions, is a useful and positive trait for marriage (Claxton et al., 2011).

According to the findings of some studies, the traits of extraversion and conscientiousness have an important role in predicting the quality of marital experiences (Costa and McCrae, 2004). However, the relationship between extraversion and marital satisfaction has been challenging (Berlds, 2005). While some studies have reported that there is a positive relationship between extraversion and marital satisfaction (Karney and Bradbury, 1995; Shiota and Levenson, 2007; Botwin, Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Shackerin et al., 2006), some other studies have shown a negative relationship of them (Gattis et al., 2004; Heller et al., 2004; Mohammadzadeh Ebrahimi et al., 2008; Razeghi et al., 2011). Interestingly, several studies have found that there is a relationship between happiness and extroversion (Gattis et al., 2004). However, some studies have shown that there is no relationship between extraversion and marital adjustment of women and men (Olson & Nemchek, 1999).

Also, research findings about the relationship between conscientiousness and marital satisfaction are different. Some studies have indicated a positive relationship between conscientiousness and marital satisfaction (Watson & Humrhouse, 2006; Donnellan et al., 2006), while some other studies reported a lack of correlation between these two structures (Karney & Bradbury, 1995).

Although there may not be a direct relationship between some personality traits and marital satisfaction/burnout, it is likely that these personality traits (due to other factors that are related to both of them) have indirect effects (Heller et al., 2004). Hence, investigating the role of probable mediators such as age, socio-economic status, lifestyle and other personality traits will be helpful. Also, the study of similarity or differences between couples in terms of personality traits and its effect on marital satisfaction or burnout is suggested. In this study, factors such as age

of marriage, years of common life, divorce history, job satisfaction and work experience haven't been controlled. It is recommended that attention be paid to these in future studies.

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